First Call for Children

'The essential needs of children should be given priority in bad times as well as good' — *Plan of Action, World Summit for Children*

Development: A New Mind-set

For years, international agencies and non-governmental organizations have been painting a grim picture of the developing world, usually in a well-intentioned effort to rally support and funds for change. Perhaps they have it all wrong. For a different approach, see pages 8-9.

Inside:

After the Gulf War

Perceptions Change in U.S.

Day of the African Child

Peru Fights Cholera

The Convention: The Next Steps

unicef

No. 1

First Call for Children

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Why 'First Call'?

Most healthy children, at around age two or three, go through a period sometimes referred to as 'the whys', when they constantly bombard their parents with questions about why things are the way they are. No answer seems to satisfy children in this stage of innocent inquisitiveness, often to the exasperation of adults.

A few months later the 'why' phase is over. I suspect that, all too often, it is because children soon learn through bitter experience that adults get uncomfortable or even angry when asked too many questions — especially hard-to-answer questions about why the world is as it is.

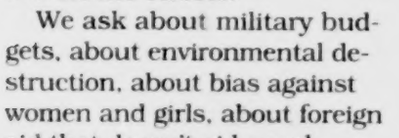
My colleagues and I at UNICEF have never gotten over 'the whys'.

We look at a world in which one out of every five people — over a billion human beings — lives in dire poverty and we ask 'why'. We ask why it is that every day 40,000 children die of largely preventable causes. We ask why more than 100 million children are denied primary education and more than 30 million live on the streets.

We ask about military budgets, about environmental destruction, about bias against women and girls, about foreign aid that doesn't aid people.

The new UNICEF publication you are reading, *First Call for Children*, is designed to deal with these *'whys'* by providing a forum for information on difficulties that confront children. Readers will be able to share ideas on what works, what doesn't, and lessons to be learned from experiences in working for children around the world.

This coming together of people courageous enough to ask 'why' reached its highest expression in 1990, when the Convention on the Rights of the Child came into force and the World Summit for Children was held at the United Nations — committing Governments and leaders to a 'first call for children' philosophy and an action programme for real change during the 1990s. This publication, *First Call for Children*, is a product of that commitment.



James P. Grant
Executive Director, UNICEF

Amid Despair in the Gulf, New Hope for Children

by Jay Ross

The pictures on the television screen and the headlines in the newspapers have become all too familiar. They tell a story of massive disintegration of the economic, political and social systems in the Persian Gulf region since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait last August.

As usual, children were hit hardest, particularly among the hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced persons who fled their homes.

The result has "been a damaged generation of children", according to Richard Reid, UNICEF Regional Director, Middle East and North Africa, until May.

The period since August, he said, has been "the worst for the region's children in at least 20 years. It has been a season of shock, threat and setback, marked by economic collapse, military actions and huge population movements". Close to 4 million people, many with only the shirts on their backs, have poured across the borders of Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Syria and Turkey.

Kurdish girls fetching scarce water in Erbil, Iraq. (UN/158310/John Isaac)

But even while he provided a litany of statistics detailing the disaster children in the Gulf have experienced, Mr. Reid expressed confidence that the now divided nations of the region will once again work together for the betterment of their children.

"Children", he said, "can become a rallying point, a common

see GULF, page 2

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Getting Down to Cases

by Thomas Hammarberg

Now that almost half the members of the United Nations have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the focus is shifting towards implementing the historic document to make guaranteed rights for children a reality.

What is essential now is to understand not only what the Convention provides for children but also the ideas behind the treaty and how to use its procedures effectively.

This will be a key task of the 10-person Committee on the Rights of the Child which was elected in March and is to issue reports on compliance with the Convention by countries that have ratified it.

The 10 experts have been elected in their individual capacities, rather than as voices of the 10 countries of which they are citizens.

The procedures laid down in the Convention call for States Parties to report to the Committee on implementation of the provisions of the agreement for the first time within two years after ratification. The Committee will scrutinize these reports.

Government reports to the Committee and its deliberations should enhance public discussion of children's issues, and the reports should be made widely available to the public in their own countries. The Committee, in turn, is to report every two years to the United Nations General Assembly.

The Committee is likely to be guided by the consideration that respect for the wishes of children themselves is much clearer in the Convention than in earlier declarations on the rights of the child. When courts, welfare institutions or administrative authorities deal with children, the child's interest should be the main concern; the child's opinions should be given careful consideration. In matters of discipline, the dignity of the child should be respected.

The procedures in monitoring child rights by the Committee will be different from the usual models in the field of human rights. The thrust is not finger-pointing but rather constructive and aid-oriented. The aim is that the Committee — together with the reporting Government and any aid agencies involved — should attempt to define the problems and discuss what remedies are necessary.

The Convention recognizes the problem of limited resources in poor countries and says that Governments should undertake appropriate measures in accordance with their available resources.

This might turn out to be an unfortunate escape clause, but it is significant that the same article points at the possibility of international assistance. No other international human rights instrument makes such a clear

see CASES, page 6

GULF, from page 1
denominator between countries that have become adversaries in the last year."

Ironically, there is likely to be a side benefit from the situation in Iraq which could enhance co-operation between non-governmental organizations and UNICEF. Previously the Iraqi Government had not allowed NGOs to operate in the country, but in the current crisis it has indicated that it will give them the green light for assistance activities.

"Many things have changed since August", Mr. Reid said, but "along with the calamities, a whole new set of opportunities have opened up, especially for UNICEF-NGO cooperation".

What needs to be done as soon as possible, he added, is to allow Iraq to start solving its food-deficit problems itself by buying giant quantities of grain and other foodstuffs as soon as possible to avert "a famine of Biblical proportions". Noting that Iraq consumes 7 million tonnes of food annually, of which 5 million tonnes is imported, he said, "There is no way external relief organizations, the United Nations, or anyone else can begin to provide such massive tonnages. It can only be done by Iraqi Government means".

He said Iraq has been able to improve and repair its water and sanitation facilities because of continued technical guidance and material inputs by ICRC, UNICEF and a variety of NGOs.

Referring to the entire Middle East and North Africa region, he said the achievements of the last decade, such as reaching the 80 per cent target of the universal child immunization programme and halving of infant mortality rates, "are now at risk".

"Health and Education Ministry budgets have been gutted", he said. "The numbers of absolute poor have risen alarmingly. Today, some 55 per cent of the region's total population have incomes of $750 a year or less.

"It is crucial, even in the face of an emergency alert across the region, that we and Governments find ways to sustain the regular programmes in child development and survival before permanent damage sets in."

In a speech during the UNICEF Executive Board meeting in April, Mr. Reid outlined the impact of the events on the region.

"As unemployment and total loss of income hit hundreds of thousands of families in these countries, the real impact was felt on the family level.

"Once well-fed families are reduced to meals of tea, bread, tomatoes and cucumbers. Infant growth slowed down or stopped; children fainted in classrooms; the number of low-birth-weight babies doubled in some countries, quadrupled in others."

That situation was then exacerbated in Iraq by the flight of hundreds of thousands of Kurds in the north to the Turkish and Iranian frontier areas.

John Usher, UNICEF Chief of Media Relations, who visited the Kurdish area in eastern Turkey and northern Iraq in April, described the scene as "Hell on a mountainside".

Baghdad: Hungry and Dark

by Franciska von Vietinghoff

BAGHDAD — The six-lane highway follows a nearly straight eastward direction from the Jordanian border with Iraq for 530 kilometres to Baghdad.

Events have wrought havoc on Baghdad, a city that is wounded, hungry and dark. The remains of administrative buildings tell of precision bombings: their structures still stand erect and endure, while the hollow insides are a reminder of the total destruction of the country's modern communications system.

The bombing of the city also targeted the two busiest bridges: they dip into the river like shattered Lego sets.

As the temperatures steadily rise towards the long and very hot summer, Baghdad inhabitants fear for their daily bread and their health. Foodstuffs, 70 per cent of which used to be imported, are now scarce, and the polluted water supply could bring epidemics of cholera and typhoid.

In spite of official price controls on consumer items, there has been hyperinflation since August last year. The price of most basic necessities has increased by 1,000 per cent or more, and at the same time incomes have dwindled. Living standards have declined rapidly over the last few months.

A displaced Kurdish woman and child on a road near Sulaymaniyah.
(UN/158317/John Isaac)

On days when the winds blow from the south, the sunlight is dimmed by the black soot carried from the burning oilfields of Kuwait. Observers sent by the international community returned from Basra in the south and from Kirkuk in the north with tales of abandoned ghost cities resulting from the war and civil strife.

Yet, the Baghdad residents I meet are determined to return to work and school as soon as any means of transportation allow.

Until just recently, Baghdad was a modern, energetic, high-tech city. Yet despite the fast pace, Baghdad's charm from ancient times was preserved. Gardens abound, and at every turn I could see domes and minarets ornamented in blue and glazed tiles, or covered with gold leaf. Now as I walk in this city, once treasured for its beauty, tolerance and wisdom, I fear for its precious heritage.

Franciska von Vietinghoff is on special leave from UNICEF in Iraq. She works with refugees and Kurdish displaced persons.

Delivering the Goods

by John Usher

COPENHAGEN — The order was bizarre, even for the UNICEF Procurement and Assembly Centre (UNIPAC) in Copenhagen, which is accustomed to the unusual. The telex from Sudan two years ago was short and simple: Please authorize the purchase of "30 she-camels, preferably pregnant" by the Khartoum Office.

With Operation Lifeline Sudan seeking to overcome severe food and medical shortages in various parts of the huge country, the authorization was granted. No one in the Copenhagen Office now recalls why there was a preference for pregnant camels, but it was all in a day's work.

Shipping supplies to more than 100 countries, the UNIPAC Office in Copenhagen, which falls under the UNICEF Supply Division, is responsible for the area of largest expenditure of UNICEF funds every year. In 1990 it processed supplies and equipment valued at $255 million, about one third of the entire budget.

It provides anything from drugs to drilling rigs, rubber gloves to refrigerators — on time and at the lowest possible price. What's more, it delivers every day of the year.

The operation began modestly in the basement of the United Nations Secretariat building in 1953 with a budget of about $2 million. By 1962 it had outgrown the facilities and moved lock, stock and barrel to its present spacious dockside premises in Copenhagen.

UNICEF supply activities have high visibility, as is borne out by day-to-day media inquiries, particularly about emergency operations.

Questions in the past few months are typical: "What is UNICEF doing in the Gulf crisis?" "What action has been taken to help the Kurds fleeing Iraq?" "Is UNICEF still assisting the Dinka people in southern Sudan?" All of the reporters wanted to know what had been delivered — medicines, vaccines, blankets, tents.

The accomplishments of the supply staff in Copenhagen, New York and in the field, whether in purchasing, procurement, packing, shipping by land, sea or air, or warehousing, are impressive. And the figures, for a relatively small organization like UNICEF, are astonishing.

The largest single expenditure for supplies shipped from the warehouse last year was for vaccines and related equipment totalling $87 million. UNICEF is the world's biggest individual purchaser of vaccines.

Other commodities included vehicles and spare parts, valued at $45 million; essential drugs, $36 million; printing equipment and paper products, $28 million; and hospital and medical supplies and equipment, $16 million.

"The supply operations of UNICEF account for some 50 per cent of the dollar value of programme assistance", according to a paper prepared for the 1991 UNICEF Executive Board meeting. The Supply Division also provides procurement services, as well as support to developing countries, non-governmental organizations and other agencies.

Emergencies account for 10 per cent of shipments, with the remaining 90 per cent allocated to regular programme support. However, emergencies, being unpredictable and sudden, take more energy and effort.

As the UNIPAC brochure put it: "An emergency has no respect for office hours or calendars. UNIPAC must remain on the alert 24 hours of each day of the year — with an ear to the phone and an eye to the telex."

Looking down on the packing floor of the Copenhagen warehouse, which is the size of three football fields and is being expanded, the visitor is reminded of an assembly line. The boxes roll from packer to packer, each commodity or set of commodities is inserted. A place for everything, everything in its place.

UNIPAC has been described as "the Sears Roebuck of the United Nations", but it is unlikely that Sears, in its long history as a mail-order supplier across the United States and beyond, ever received a request for 30 camels, male or female, and certainly not pregnant.

And then there was the request from Mozambique for parts for a motorcycle. It was quickly followed, however, by a message to ignore the request. The motorcycle had been stolen.

All in a day's work at UNIPAC in Copenhagen.

Africa's Children

A Special Day to Celebrate

by Ian Steele

Scores of countries in Africa and beyond are holding special events this year commemorating 16 June as the Day of the African Child, a celebration that is to become an annual event.

The decision to give special recognition to the needs of African children follows a resolution of the 51-member Organization of African Unity (OAU) last July, which also declared the 1990s the 'Decade for the Survival, Protection and Development of the African Child'.

The 16 June date marks the 15th anniversary of the 1976 anti-apartheid uprising in Soweto, South Africa, which started when thousands of students boycotted classes.

The celebration has been designed to focus on the African child at a time when world attention is increasingly shifting to children in other areas, particularly the Persian Gulf and Eastern Europe. Both the needs and the achievements of children in the continent will be highlighted.

In addition to high-level political support, the Day is being backed by NGO groups, artists and intellectuals, teachers and children, religious leaders and parliamentarians, as well as UNICEF field offices and National Committees. UNICEF has produced a special information kit for the occasion.

As of early May, celebrations were being prepared in 20 countries in Africa: Burkina Faso, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

The events during the month of June include presidential ceremonies, performances by artists and intellectuals, sports days, competitions for children, mock parliaments, seminars and workshops. Celebrations were also planned at the United Nations and in the United States and Australia.

The Day is being celebrated against a background of emergencies in several countries, and acute economic hardships in many others. Twenty-nine of the world's 42 least developed countries are in Africa, and their people generally lack the necessary resources to cushion shocks caused by sometimes violent fluctuations in their fortunes.

The economic crisis of the 1980s has dogged nations into the new decade, accompanied by crippling debt burdens and structural adjustment programmes which have forced deep cuts in social spending. Prolonged military conflicts have further complicated this picture for many nations.

UNICEF is currently planning emergency interventions with an estimated cost of $110 million in 10 African nations, where more than 25 million people are affected by crisis situations.

Children are at greatest risk in these emergency situations. Their survival and early physical and mental development are dependent on a balanced intake of nutrients.

The biggest funding requirements are for Angola, $22.8 million; Ethiopia, $17.8 million; Mozambique, $19.6 million and Sudan, $30 million. Other countries where emergency situations exist in Africa are: Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, Malawi, Sierra Leone and Somalia.

By most overall statistical measurements, Africa's children face far worse problems than the young on other continents, but this can provide a misleading picture. Despite common perceptions in the industrialized world, most of Africa's children are not starving, on the knife-edge of survival or illiterate.

A more meaningful measurement is to weigh progress against the past. On that basis, many African nations, driven by a rising tide of national commitments to basic health and other services for children, have come a long way in the three decades since most of them became independent.

Today, in spite of economic constraints, the future for most of Africa's children is brighter than it was for their parents.
(UNICEF/4437/Maggie Murray-Lee)

African nations were among the first to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child last year, and OAU members have followed up with an African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. In the last year, there have been increasing moves to open the political system to broader participation in response to demands for multi-party systems.

African leaders were also highly supportive of the 1990 World Summit for Children. Their long-standing concerns are reflected in:

- ❖ immunization programmes to fight diseases, including tuberculosis, measles, diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus and polio;
- ❖ nutrition programmes for infants, small children and pregnant women, and efforts to provide nutritional supplements including vitamin A to combat nutritional blindness; iron to curb anaemia; and iodine to prevent goitre, cretinism and other impairments;
- ❖ programmes to control diarrhoeal diseases by providing access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities, and to treat diarrhoeal dehydration with oral rehydration therapy;
- ❖ policies which support basic education and which aim to ensure equal access to schooling for girls as well as boys.

Despite profound economic, social and other constraints on the development of African nations over the past decade, some of the gains in these areas have been extraordinary.

The countries of northern Africa have achieved immunization coverage of almost 80 per cent of children under the age of one against the six leading diseases that kill or cripple children: diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, polio, tuberculosis and measles. Although less success has been registered on immunization in sub-Saharan Africa, 18 out of the 44 countries in the region achieved targets of 75 per cent coverage in 1990.

Access to safe drinking water has increased over the past decade from 83 per cent to 87 per cent in urban areas, and from 33 per cent to 42 per cent in rural areas. Sanitation coverage rose during the same period from 65 per cent to 79 per cent in urban areas and from 18 per cent to 26 per cent in rural areas.

Primary school enrolments and the quality of education slumped towards the end of the 1980s, but enrolments rose dramatically during the 1970s from 65 per cent to almost 90 per cent for boys, and from about 44 per cent to almost 69 per cent for girls.

Accompanying these developments has been a steady increase in life expectancy from just 41 years in 1960 to 53 years today. At the same time, infant and child mortality rates have been cut by almost 45 per cent.

UNICEF has been a partner in this progress, more than doubling its financial support for child survival and development initiatives in the region over the past decade. This commitment is expected to grow as countries give increasing attention to new challenges such as AIDS, safe motherhood and the particular needs of girls.

UNICEF Emergency Funding Requirements

Country	Affected Population Millions	Total Emergency Appeal US$
Horn of Africa:		
* Ethiopia	6.6	17.8
* Somalia	4.5	4.1
* Sudan	7.7	30.0
Subtotal	18.8	51.9
Southern Africa:		
Angola	1.9	22.8
* Mozambique	2.4	19.6
* Malawi	1.0	0.9
Subtotal	5.3	43.3
West Africa:		
* Liberia	0.5	7.2
Guinea, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire	0.8	7.6
Subtotal	1.3	14.8
Total	**25.4**	****110.0**

* Revised assessment of 1991 needs as of 8/2/91.
** See separate funding document for contributions against these appeals.

Rebuilding Liberia

NGOs Play Vital Role

by Louise Talbot

Peace and stability are still elusive in Liberia almost six months after a cease-fire ended a year of civil strife, which led to the overthrow of the Government and disrupted the lives of more than 2 million people.

The death-toll in the war is estimated at between 10,000 and 25,000 people, many of them children. More than 700,000 Liberians have become refugees in neighbouring countries and about 1 million are displaced inside the country.

However, there are signs that the situation is improving, particularly in Monrovia, the capital, partly as a result of assistance from numerous international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The efforts started after a cease-fire, monitored by a peace-keeping force from neighbouring countries of the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS), went into effect last December.

"With the advent of a cease-fire, economic activity, however small, has resumed in Monrovia with the waterside market coming back to life and the veil of gloom lifting slowly", said UNICEF Assistant Representative Tony Raby.

NGOs have played a vital role in helping to restore essential services in the country. "The establishment of order in Monrovia has allowed for the expansion of programme activity and the arrival of an increasing number of NGO groups", according to UNICEF Operations Officer Peter McDermott, who carried out an assessment mission in March. "At one point, a new NGO was arriving on every incoming flight", he said.

"The NGO groups have provided extensive assistance, significantly more than the UN", Mr. McDermott said in his report. About two dozen NGOs, including those based in the industrialized and developing nations, international and religious-based groups, are involved in the assistance in the fields of health, nutrition, water and sanitation, and children in especially difficult circumstances.

UNICEF is also assisting in these same areas, as well as in immunization, as part of the overall United Nations emergency relief effort in Monrovia. So far, the UN agencies have been able to do little in the countryside, where the war started and the situation is still difficult, although a number of NGOs are active in the area.

A UNICEF study in December showed that 27 per cent of the child population of Monrovia was either moderately or severely malnourished. A follow-up survey in April proved the efficiency of the UNICEF/NGO nutritional support: the rate was down to 5 per cent.

Within 12 weeks of the cease-fire, essential food, water, electricity and health services were restored in the capital, Mr. McDermott said.

As part of a fund-raising appeal for emergency situations in Africa, UNICEF is seeking to raise $7.2 million for programmes in Monrovia for the rest of the year, and another $3 million for start-up funds for the rest of Liberia. In the first three months of the year, about $3 million was spent.

The funds to be used in Monrovia are for medical supplies and drugs; re-establishment of the immunization programme; provision of supplementary and therapeutic feeding; support for abandoned children; and the rehabilitation of the power and water distribution networks.

The emergency programme in the countryside is designed to assist 1.5 million people, mostly women and children. The funds are to cover water, power and sanitation activities, health and nutrition, education, and support for children in especially difficult circumstances.

Nutritional support from NGOs and UNICEF is an essential part of the international relief effort in Liberia. (UNICEF/Jeremy Hartley)

One of the most impressive achievements in the UNICEF area of responsibility was carried out in cooperation with four Nordic nations — Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden — with major staffing input from Swedrelief, a civilian disaster relief unit in the Swedish Defence Ministry.

At the time of the cease-fire, Monrovia had no operating hospital, but eight days after the Swedrelief team arrived in late January, a 150-bed field hospital was opened. In less than a month, 1,300 people had been treated, 500 had been hospitalized and 50 operations had been performed.

Moving rapidly, Swedrelief and UNICEF planned the operation on the ground in Monrovia. Sweden provided 37 medical personnel, Norway donated the hospital and some medical supplies, and Denmark and Finland contributed funds.

By mid-February, 21 health centres and 14 first aid posts were opened, just two months after health services had been a shambles. In March, 10,000 to 11,000 people a week were receiving medical care at the various facilities around the capital. By the end of March, UNICEF had assisted in re-establishing four hospitals with a total of 285 beds.

Although there were some problems in implementing the Nordic aid package, as would be expected in such a quickly assembled operation, Sweden has indicated its intent to extend the programme until the end of October at a cost of $1.2 million. Norway has provided another $305,000. The cooperation has been so successful that UNICEF is exploring the possibility of replicating such assistance in future emergencies.

UNICEF has also been active in restoring water and sanitation services to stem the spread of water-borne diseases. Originally this was carried out in conjunction with Médecins sans frontières–Belgium, USAID and ICRC, but some of the other agencies pulled out of the project after elementary services were restored.

This has left UNICEF in the unusual position of being the major supporter for the water, sanitation and electric power systems in Monrovia, supplying funds, spare parts and logistics assistance.

Mr. McDermott noted that this has caused "somewhat of a programmatic dilemma" for UNICEF, since it normally does not run public utilities.

However, emergencies can create exceptional situations. A survey by the World Health Organization in January indicated a 20 per cent mortality rate from diarrhoea-related diseases, and noted that less than 8 per cent of Monrovia's population had even partial access to clean tap water. Almost 60 per cent relied on water drawn from wells, and a separate ICRC survey showed that only about 10 per cent of 229 shallow wells were properly constructed to avoid contamination.

Since the treated water supply for Monrovia is totally dependent on electric power, UNICEF found itself in both the water and electric power business for the time being.

The up-side is that "the rehabilitation of these services has had a dramatic psychological and physical effect on the population, bringing a semblance of normality back to a society traumatized by civil war", Mr. McDermott said in his report.

UNICEF, the World Food Programme, Médecins sans frontières–Belgium, Catholic Relief services and other NGOs joined forces to avert a food-supply catastrophe.

As part of the programme, UNICEF helped establish more than 40 supplementary feeding centres that serve more than 22,000 children. Another 18 therapeutic feeding centres are benefiting about 1,500 children. The centres played a key role in the decline in the number of malnourished children.

"The relief efforts in Monrovia were exceptionally successful because there was one single programme, recognized as such and with a well-thought-out organizational structure which was adhered to", Mr. Raby said.

Bolivia and the Convention

The Road to Child Rights

Bolivia, one of the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child, has been a pioneer in giving legal meaning to children's rights. Yet, translation of these good intentions into reality has been a difficult process. This article, based partly on a case-study by UNICEF La Paz, examines how Bolivia achieved rapid ratification of the Convention, and the challenges, opportunities — and problems — it presents.

More than a generation before the Convention became international law in 1990, Bolivia had already provided specific legal protection for children in a 1955 Declaration on the rights of the Bolivian child. The law spelled out rights to life, education, development and protection four years before the United Nations approved its own Declaration on the Rights of the Child.

Yet Bolivia ranks at or near the bottom among Latin American nations in many key indicators for children, including the under-five mortality rate. Put simply, "there is not enough money to go around", Jim Mayrides, the UNICEF Representative, said in an interview in New York.

Since the 1955 Declaration, "the position of the child on the national political agenda has varied", the Bolivia case-study said, "reflecting periods of governmental instability. At the worst of times, children did not have rights so much as problems."

Ratification of the Convention is no panacea. The country case-study notes that "legal tools such as the Convention must be seen in the light of Bolivian reality". Not all laws are enforceable.

For example, national law calls for iodine to be added to all salt produced for human consumption to prevent goitre. "But the law is not enforced: the capacity to do so is not yet in place. Similarly, national law provides for mandatory and free primary education. The number of schools and number of teachers, particularly in rural areas, simply do not permit compliance."

However, ratification of the Convention means that the Government now "has the additional responsibility under law to meet the targets it has set".

In May 1990 Bolivia became the eighth country to ratify the Convention, which, by May 1991, has been ratified by 80 nations.

One of the key landmarks on Bolivia's road to ratification occurred in September 1989, two months before the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention, when UNICEF co-sponsored a conference to analyse the Convention in the Bolivian context.

The meeting was organized by the Coordinator of Pro-Child Organizations of the Department of La Paz and was sponsored by the Christian Children's Fund and the Bank of Santa Cruz, as well as by UNICEF. The gathering, chaired by the Vice-President, was attended by representatives of about 50 non-governmental organizations, both national and international, religious and secular. Senior officials and Members of Parliment also attended, as did members of the armed forces and the national police.

The meeting "certainly spurred Bolivia's early ratification", according to the case-study.

A national presidential election campaign in 1989 also presented numerous opportunities to highlight the importance of the Convention.

Aside from the Government, key collaborators with UNICEF in working for ratification were the Roman Catholic Church and its social action agencies, Caritas and the National Pastoral Service, and the Bolivian Central Labour Union.

UNICEF used a variety of major meetings to advocate for children and the Convention, including presentations at the National Bishop's Conference in November 1988 and the first Andean Labour Congress on Child Health in August 1989.

Sometimes the effort to build an alliance for child rights across the political, economic and social spectrum had to overcome rivalries among politicians and labour groups with competing agendas.

"The trick", according to the case-study, "is to convince all concerned that child survival is a political issue, but not one to be used for political purposes. This is a continuing process."

The success of the political mobilization was clear: within four days of when the new Government took office in August 1989, top UNICEF officials had met with the President and most other key officials, providing "an invaluable opportunity to present the case for children to the highest authorities of the country at the very outset of their term". Among the immediate results was the establishment of a Commission on Children and Youth which spearheaded the ratification of the Convention. In addition, the Ministry of Planning established the post of Under-Secretary for Social Policy. A select council within the Cabinet of Ministers was also set up to establish a cohesive social programme.

What ratification of the Convention has done, Mr. Mayrides noted, is "to put children on the political, economic and social agendas. Government officials, people in non-governmental organizations and people at large are talking about children's issues. They're aware".

The challenge now, he said, is to translate this interest and concern into concrete action. The Government is scheduled to approve by August or September a new legal code dealing with children's rights, child labour and homeless children. The Convention is being used as a guideline for the new code.

Mr. Mayrides said he hopes that the code will serve as a lever to put homeless children back in school or into apprenticeships and other kinds of training programmes. Another benefit could be an expansion of foster care for homeless children who are often simply detained by the police.

The UNICEF country office used an 11-day visit to Bolivia last February by Lisbet Palme, Chairman of the UNICEF Executive Board, to bring home the message of the importance that implementation of the Convention can play in child survival, protection and development.

Ms. Palme talked with more than 50 government officials and religious, labour and NGO leaders, many of whom played a key role in ratification. In numerous meetings throughout the country she frequently stressed the significance of the Convention.

In a speech at the prefecture in Cochabamba, south-east of La Paz, the capital, she told officials: "There is still much work to be done to make children's rights a reality. It is a step-by-step process. Goals must be set for each article of the Convention. The whole society has a role in this process."

In an interview in New York, Ms. Palme said the Convention provides for countries that have ratified it "a common plan, the same language and common standards to measure the condition of children". She added, "Even countries that have not ratified will change as their neighbours change".

She also noted that the Convention, by including all children — East and West, North and South — helps to mobilize support in the industrialized nations for assistance to children in the developing nations.

Bolivia provides a good example of the need for such assistance. Despite its early ratification of the Convention and enthusiastic support of the World Summit for Children Declaration and Plan of Action, there has been no change yet in the country's budget priorities, Mr. Mayrides said. With 95 per cent of the health and education budgets devoted to staff costs, international aid and NGO assistance present the major possibilities for funding to bring about change for children.

For UNICEF, Bolivia's ratification has led to raised expectations and new opportunities for improving the state of children, the country study says. This, in turn, means that more funding is needed.

The Convention presents UNICEF with a unique, double-pronged approach to advocacy in the country, the report maintains. First, UNICEF promoted ratification, and now that the Convention has legal standing in Bolivia it can be used as a tool to further the cause of child survival, development and protection for the country's children.

Bolivian boys who should be in school shine shoes to earn a living.
(UNICEF/3733/Alex Graciano)

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Monitoring Committee Elected

The first members of the Committee set up to monitor observance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child have been elected.

The six women and four men, all authorities in the field of children's rights, were chosen from 35 nominees by the first 70 nations to ratify the Convention at elections held on 1 March at the United Nations.

The Committee will identify problems which prevent children from enjoying their full rights in countries that have ratified the Convention, and it will try to point out solutions, especially ones which have worked elsewhere.

The new committee members, who represent different regions and legal systems, will serve in their personal capacities, although they were nominated by their Governments. They are:

MS. HODA BADRAN (Egypt), Secretary-General of Egypt's National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, and former UNICEF Representative in Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

MS. AKILA BELEMBAOGO (Burkina Faso), Technical Adviser on children's affairs, social rehabilitation and legal matters to the Secretary of Social Action of Burkina Faso.

MS. MARIA DE FATIMA BORGES DE OMENA (Brazil), a physician and President of the Brazilian Centre for the Youth and Child.

MS. FLORA CORPUZ-EUFEMIO (Philippines), Under-Secretary at the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

BISHOP BAMBAREN GASTELUMENDI (Peru), Vice-President of Caritas International and President of Peru's Episcopal Family Committee.

MR. THOMAS HAMMARBERG (Sweden), Secretary-General of Rädda Barnen (Swedish Save the Children), and a former Secretary-General of Amnesty International.

MR. YOURI KOLOSOV (USSR), a member of the Soviet Association of International Law and author of more than 200 monographs and articles on international law and human rights.

MS. SANDRA PRUNELLA MASON (Barbados), a Chief Magistrate and a Judge of the country's Juvenile Court.

MR. SWITHUN MOMBESHORA (Zimbabwe), Minister of State for Local Government, Rural and Urban Development of Zimbabwe and President Mugabe's personal representative to the Planning Committee on the World Summit for Children.

MS. MARTA SANTOS PAIS (Portugal), Adviser in Portugal's Office of Documentation and Comparative Law and a member of the Portuguese Commission for the Promotion of Human Rights and Equality in the field of education.

Brazilian boys band together for mutual support as a substitute for the families they do not have. (UNICEF/1455/ Claudio Edinger)

Half of the committee members will come up for election every four years, so initially, five committee members were drawn by lot to serve for only two years. These are Ms. Badran, Ms. Borges de Omena, Ms. Corpuz-Eufemio, Mr. Mombeshora and Ms. Santos Pais, who will stand down when the next elections are held in February 1993.

In another development involving the Convention, the Italian Committee for UNICEF has promoted an initiative to mobilize mayors as defenders of children.

The mayors are to call individual town council meetings at least once a year to focus on what can be achieved locally to solve problems of children and help their happy development.

CASES, from page 1

linkage between reports on violations and aid. This will probably be helpful for the work of the Committee in developing countries.

It will not be easy for the Committee to evaluate the implementation of some of the provisions in the Convention — for instance, the one on "child survival" — as the concrete obligations are not specified in the text of the Convention.

In particular, evaluating economic and social rights of a collective nature will require a creative approach by the Committee. The main point is whether Governments will demonstrate a genuine intention to provide such rights.

It has been left to the Committee to work out its own rules of procedure. However, the Convention stipulates that UNICEF and the United Nations specialized agencies will be entitled to take part in its work. "Other competent bodies" are also invited to provide expert advice. This refers to non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which thereby are recognized as contributors to the process.

The main theme in the Convention is "the best interests of the child". More than any earlier international agreement, it recognizes children as having equal standing with adults.

The Convention marks the end of the age-old idea that children, at least in legal terms, are no more than possessions of their guardians. At the same time, it recognizes children as children. The importance of a happy childhood is accepted for its own sake and not merely as a preparation for life as an adult.

The substantive articles are meant to cover all kinds of human rights: economic, social and cultural, as well as civil and political rights. The division between these categories of rights, which often has plagued the United Nations discussion on human rights generally, is not reflected in this Convention. It has an integrated approach.

The principles in the Convention form a vision of children in society which should not be lost in the implementation process. The very use of the term 'rights' challenges the charitable approach which has dominated attitudes towards children.

By spelling out children's rights in considerable detail, the Convention makes it unmistakably clear that these rights, far from being a matter of charity, should be given political priority by Governments.

Implementation of these rights is only part of the challenge presented by the Convention, which has come into effect internationally faster than any other human rights treaty in history. Implementation must be supplemented by other actions to promote the Convention, by Governments as well as non-governmental groups.

❖ **The Convention and its main points should be made widely known.** The Convention text should be translated into all relevant languages. Shorter, less legalistic versions, which in summary form could be understood by broader audiences, should also be disseminated. All personnel dealing with children in their jobs should be offered information and training about the Convention. Schools have a special responsibility. Media should be encouraged to report on the Convention.

❖ **Further ratifications should be encouraged.** Governments that hesitate because of the difficulties of a ratification process which requires a review of laws and policies should be offered assistance.

The sad fact that so few of the richer Western countries have ratified ought to be discussed. The aim is for all United Nations members to ratify by 1996, when the first monitoring committee completes its term.

❖ **National Commissions should be formed.** It will be important to have a focal point in each country. Such a national commission should include the participation of non-governmental interests. One of its tasks could be to coordinate information about the Convention, as well as to monitor its implementation in the country. Findings should be made public.

❖ **Further international coordination should be organized.** It seems natural for UNICEF to have a coordinating role within the United Nations context for the promotion of the Convention, while the Committee itself should concentrate on its monitoring role. It is crucial for all relevant United Nations agencies to work for the implementation of the Convention within their respective fields.

❖ **Reporting should be followed by concrete development assistance.** The implementation of several of the articles in the Convention requires financial resources that may not be available to poorer countries. The reports, which should be thorough, factual and impartial regardless of the political colour or resources of the Government, should be followed up with assistance.

Thomas Hammarberg is the Secretary-General of Rädda Barnen, Sweden, and a member of the newly-elected Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Opinion

New Horizons for Children

by Victor Soler-Sala

The Convention on the Rights of the Child has brought us to a watershed at UNICEF in our work for children.

When the Convention became international law on 2 September 1990, it established that, for most purposes, a child is any person under the age of 18 and that the child's well-being is a responsibility to be shared by parents, the nation and the international community if local support is inadequate.

The Convention established the child's right to every available means of survival, protection and development, as well as the right to participate in decisions affecting his or her future. It covers all of the childs needs as an individual and addresses civil and political rights as well as social and economic entitlements — a holistic approach that will challenge the resolve of every nation. The Convention recognizes that children are at risk in all societies regardless of the religious, cultural, economic or other benefits at a nation's disposal.

Given the scope and universality of the Convention, it is difficult to escape the implication that UNICEF, if it is to keep faith with the document, must also expand its horizons and embrace concerns within a larger framework — a framework encompassing the first 18 years of children's lives in rich and poor nations alike. Considering the public and political attention the Convention has already received, some observers are beginning to ask when UNICEF might become an agency for all the world's children. The document could certainly be a basis for discussion on the limits of the UNICEF mandate.

The UNICEF Consultative Group on Child Rights came to the conclusion in July 1990 that all aspects of the Convention are of interest and relevance to UNICEF and its work, including concerns which range through the various stages of childhood. As a sponsor of last year's World Conference on Education for All, UNICEF supported the right of every child to primary education through ages 5 to 12. And it is vitally concerned with the rights of the girl child to equal opportunities, not only as a moral imperative, but also as an avenue to better health, education and other prospects for future generations. In many countries, the girl child at age 12 may be only four years, or less, from motherhood.

Global threats, such as AIDS and climate change, have also affected the organization's optic. Both issues have complicated the picture for present and future generations, and it is impossible not to be involved. Other environmental issues, including the disposal of hazardous wastes and the provision of safe drinking water and sanitation, are also high on the UNICEF agenda. UNICEF is working to educate children — and adults — not only for their immediate protection but also to ensure that they will do whatever is necessary to see that their children are breast-fed, vaccinated and given whatever they need to survive and thrive.

The Convention has drawn together all of the many symbols in the child development equation and was the centrepiece of last year's extraordinarily successful World Summit for Children. Its 54 articles provided the framework for the event's Declaration and Plan of Action, and the high public profile and political importance given to the Summit itself accelerated ratification of the document.

Illustration by Quino

Within 10 months of its adoption, 20 nations had ratified the Convention and secured its place in international law. No other human rights treaty in history has enjoyed such universal acceptance or been ratified so quickly. At the time of writing, 80 States are parties to the Convention and an additional 57 are signatories to it. The Convention will be the umbrella for implementation of the Summit Plan of Action through the 1990s and beyond.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child brings a new dimension to UNICEF-assisted programmes and strengthens their prospects for continuity. States that ratify the Convention will be committed in writing to international law — an obligation which will bind nations to established priorities, even though government or leadership may change.

The Convention is a platform for dramatic change not only for children but also for the Governments and the international organizations that serve them. Solidarity and sharing are key words in the contract to meet children's needs.

Nations ratifying the Convention are obliged to meet its economic, social and cultural ideals "to the maximum extent of their available resources". This obligation is binding locally and globally. States Parties have a responsibility to the children of poorer nations as well as to their own. It is unacceptable under the terms of the Convention for a country to say, "We have taken care of our children's needs, therefore we have fulfilled our obligations". Countries that ratify have obligations to all children, everywhere.

For the international agencies, responsibility for implementation of the Convention under the leadership of the United Nations Centre for Human Rights will be shared according to the capacity of each body. This is critical for UNICEF, which has assumed an advocacy role on behalf of all children but does not have the resources to follow through programmatically.

UNICEF has a special role to play as the United Nations' lead agency for children, but many other agencies also cater to children's needs and will share the load within their areas of specialization. The burden of implementation will also be shared by partners in a rapidly expanding Grand Alliance for Children that has emerged over the past decade through the agencies, National Committees, NGOs, parliamentarians, religious leaders, celebrities and others, both nationally and internationally. All are committed to seeing that the 'first call' for children is answered.

Not to be forgotten is the place that children themselves have in this Grand Alliance. They are an essential part of advocacy and mobilization. Their role is not just to sing and smile for the cameras, but to voice their concerns and be heard. We saw tens of thousands of children in Ecuador and Costa Rica last year voting for those articles of the Convention that they thought deserved the special attention of their leaders. We saw hundreds of Brazilian street children march on Parliament to underline their expectations from the nation's new constitution. Other examples of meaningful participation will surely follow elsewhere.

The Convention will be a challenge to all of us, but there is no reason to doubt that we will be equal to it.

Victor Soler Sala was closely involved in the Convention drafting process as Director of the UNICEF Geneva Office and as Director of the Division of Public Affairs. He was named UNICEF Representative in Beijing in May.

First Call for Children, in seeking to offer a forum for sharing experience and exchanging ideas, encourages contributions of articles that express opinions about what should be done about the condition of children. The Opinion section will also run letters to the Editor. ***First Call for Children*** reserves the right to edit, shorten or reject articles and letters. Contributions are welcomed from within and outside UNICEF. All such articles and letters are solely the opinion of the writer.

Attacking p
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Peter Adamson, editor of the UNICEF yearly report, The State of the World's Children, has been having second thoughts on how fund-raising organizations and the media regard international development. In a provocative speech to UNICEF National Committees in Geneva in January, excerpted here, he called for new approaches and a different mind-set to attacking the problems of the developing world.

by Peter Adamson

My main concern is not the image of UNICEF but the image of development, and of the developing world, which UNICEF communicates to the public of the industrialized world. And my main thesis is that the cumulative effect of the way we present these issues today is misleading and results in deeply held public misconceptions, which are ultimately damaging to the development process that we seek to promote.

I believe that the public at large has a very skewed view of world development — and that it is skewed heavily towards the negative.

As brief evidence for this, let me report the findings of the discussions I have had in schools in the UK and in one or two other countries in recent years. Whenever I give a talk in a school or college, usually with 16 or 17-year-olds, I end by distributing a questionnaire to both students and tutors.

I ask: What percentage of the world's children do you think are starving — defined as "visibly malnourished"? The answer is usually 50 to 70 per cent. The real answer is 1 to 2 per cent.

I ask: What percentage of the world's families are living in absolute poverty — so that they cannot meet even their most basic needs? The average answer is usually in the region of 75 per cent. The real answer is 20 to 25 per cent.

I ask: What percentage of the world's 6 to 12-year-olds start school? The average answer is usually around 10 or 20 per cent. The real answer is almost 90 per cent.

I ask: Is the rate of population growth in the developing world increasing, decreasing or staying about the same? Almost invariably, the answer is "it is increasing". The fact is that it is decreasing in every region of the developing world including Africa.

These pronounced misconceptions, all skewed in the *same direction* — towards the negative — are not confined to school children. The leader of the opposition party in my own country said in an interview recently that "*half* the world's children are starving". Eduard Shevardnadze, the former Soviet Foreign Minister, also recently said that "in the developing world, one in two children die in their first year of life". The real figure is 1 in 10.

The real question I would like to ask is: Where does this obvious bias, these public and political misconceptions, come from? Ninety per cent of people's knowledge and impressions of the developing world come from just two sources — the news media and the fund-raising agencies. Both, I believe, are responsible for distorting the public's perception of the developing world — the one because it is in the business of reporting the exceptional and the other because it is in the business of raising money.

As we all know, news reports the *exceptional*. This may not be too bad in our own societies. From our own everyday experience we know that what appears on the news — the crimes, the deaths, the rapes, the motorway accidents, etc. — do not represent the *norms* of our societies. We know they are exceptions to daily life. That is what makes them news. When we take them on board, we do so against the *ballast* of our own everyday experience and knowledge of life in our own societies.

But when it comes to the developing world, most of the public have not personal experience; they have not been to the developing world.

As a result, a large public derives its mental and emotional image of the developing world exclusively from the reporting of its exceptions rather than the experience of its normality.

Lacking this ballast, our view of the developing world naturally takes on this list towards pessimism.

The other main sources of information are the fund-raising agencies. But their message often reinforces the impression given by the media.

In the praiseworthy task of raising funds, the agencies understandably stress the plight, the misery, the need, of the developing world. It raises money; but at the same time it distorts our perceptions.

What residual impression do the reports of tragedies and the appeals for donations — the main sources of information — leave in the minds of the public?

It is an impression of parched earth and starving children.

It is an image of queues for bowls of staple food.

It is an image of devastated surroundings and bereaved families.

It is the image of the poster showing how precious a single drop of water can be.

It is the image of airlifts and trucks getting food and blankets to helpless recipients.

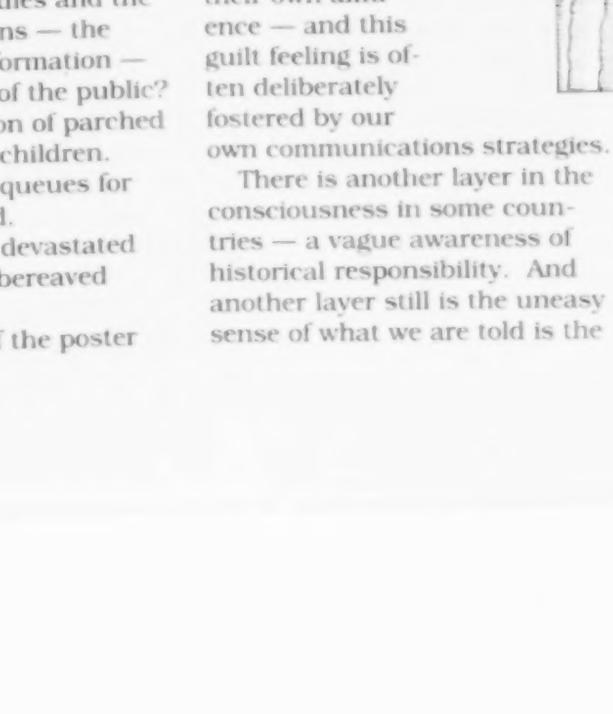
It is the image of appealing boys and girls who have no future without a postal foster parent.

These are the images with which the public consciousness is constantly stocked and replenished.

I am not making an attack on the journalists or fund-raisers. Many individual media reports and many individual fund-raising appeals are laudable in both intent and effect. But my concern is — at what cumulative price?

That price, I suggest, is the slow build-up of this almost wholly negative residual impression, an impression that the developing world is exclusively a theatre of tragedy in which poverty and human misery figure prominently in almost every scene.

Many people bring to this impression of permanent, hopeless tragedy an uncomfortable consciousness of their own affluence — and this guilt feeling is often deliberately fostered by our own communications strategies.



There is another layer in the consciousness in some countries — a vague awareness of historical responsibility. And another layer still is the uneasy sense of what we are told is the frightening fertility of the poor.

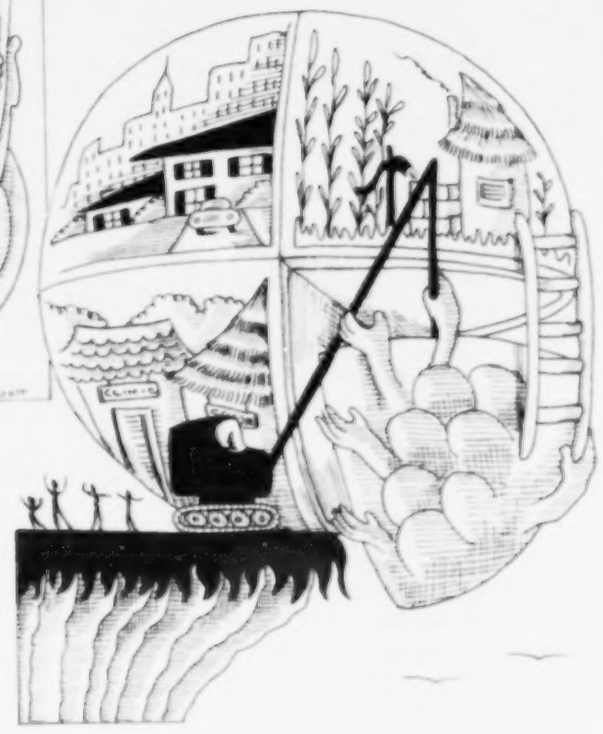
This is a potent brew. And the hallucination it creates is of an oasis of affluence surrounded by an ever-growing, ever-threatening desert of hopelessness and despair.

And with it comes an oasis mentality, tinged with guilt and anxiety, and by an irksome sense of obligation and importunity.

I believe that this is a major reason why it is more difficult to get people informed and involved in development than in other issues such as the environment. We are willing to give when the manifestations of poverty are thrust before us. But we wish, for the most part, that the poor world would just disappear from our consciousness like a coin into the darkness of the collecting box. *We are prepared to give. But we do not want to know. That is not a contradiction. It is, in my view, very largely cause and effect.*

I would like now to mention some of the specific distortions in public perception which I believe fund-raising, in general, contributes to.

The fact that such a significant percentage of our news about the poor world comes from appeals for funds, and further reports about how those funds are being used, means that the public of the industrialized world gradually acquires an exaggerated view of the role of aid and charity in the life of the poor world.



The understandable wish to demonstrate to a sometimes

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sceptical public that donor money makes a difference often results in a truly gross over-simplification of the issues.

The worst examples, to my mind, are the communications to the public which say that safe water can be brought to a whole village for two dollars per person, or that a child's life can be saved for 25 cents, or that the dollar which a member of the public gives will prevent a death from dehydration or measles, or save a child's eyesight.

It raises funds. But it is not true.

Oh I know, only too well, that it can be argued that it is true, or that the statements we make are not technically incorrect. But if we ask ourselves not 'what we say' but 'what is the received message', then we know that much of what we say is simply not true. And eventually, I am sure, cynicism will set in and we will simply not be believed — nor will we deserve to be.

By the way in which we say that solutions are simple and inexpensive, that dramatic differences can be made by just a few cents from the public, we imply that *we* have the know-how and the technique to solve *their* problems by the simplest of means, and that the people in the developing world know almost nothing. This is not what we mean to say. But we have to make the imaginative leap to focus not on what we technically say on each occasion but on what is the cumulative impact, the residual communication over time.

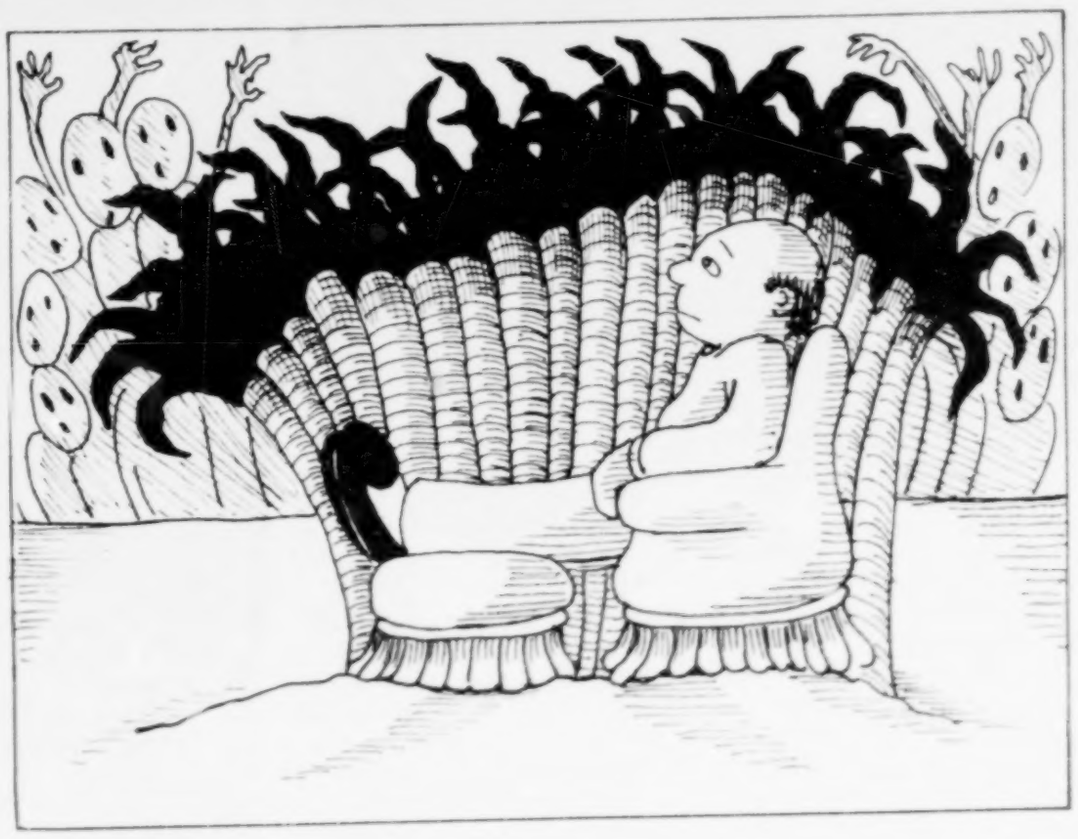
The need to show that donor money makes a difference reinforces this distortion in another way. It leads to advertisements, TV news footage, videos, communications of all kinds, of which the *residual message* is that 'nothing ever happens in the developing world unless it is organized by a white man'. This does not usually stem from racism or evil intention.

This need to demonstrate the effectiveness of public and governmental donations is giving the public the impression, over time, that we in the West are solving the problems of the developing world — or at least that we are doing enough to solve them if only the developing countries would do their bit. Again, it raises money, but again it is not true.

I do not claim to have the answers to the questions I have raised. But I am convinced that a fundamental review of what we say to the public — or rather of what residual impression the public receives over time from our communications — is necessary if we are not to find an increasing strain, an increasing contradiction, between the legitimate need to raise funds and the need to create a wider and deeper understanding of the real problems of development. At the moment, these two aims are incompatible. Indeed, I believe they are on a collision course.

I think a fundamental review is necessary on the question of how agencies concerned with fund-raising present the issue of development to the public at large. And I believe that we can no longer be content with the argument that if we don't raise funds in this way then others will and we will merely lose our 'share of the market'.

A parallel with the environmental issue suggests itself. When it is necessary for a change in industrial practice in order to protect the environment, companies often say they can't make such a change because it would make them less competitive. The answer, obviously, is either that *all companies* take the required action so that the environment is protected but no one company loses out in relation to another.



I believe that the agencies that are concerned with information and fund-raising in the industrialized world for the purpose of helping the developing world should come together to discuss these issues and to work out a code of practice in this area — a *common* code on communications for and about the developing world.

Many of the distortions I have mentioned could be corrected, at least in part, by giving much more emphasis to the *achievements* of the developing world. And I would like to say why I think this is so very important for the long term.

Let me first bring together some of the most basic of all facts about world development — facts which have never made the nightly news but which *have* changed the daily lives of a majority of the world's people:

- Average *real* incomes in the poor world have more doubled in the last 40 years — despite population growth.
- Under-five death rates — one of the most sensitive indicators of overall human well-being — have been cut by 50 per cent or more in every region of the world over the last 40 years.
- Average life expectancy has risen by over one third in every region of the developing world since 1950, and by much more in many regions.
- The proportion of the developing world's children who go to primary school has risen from less than half to more than three quarters in the last 40 years — despite a 50 per cent increase in the absolute number of school-age children.
- And in just the years from 1970 to 1985, the percentage of people with access to safe water supply has risen from about 10 per cent to about 60 per cent in rural areas of the developing world.

Such facts and figures do paper over problems and disparities. Large numbers of people have been bypassed by progress. Population growth is still a problem. Poverty, oppression and exploitation are still alive and well.

But is is equally undeniable that three quarters of mankind is significantly better fed, healthier, more educated, longer lived and more productive than it was only one generation ago.

The importance of this, for our work with public opinion, is that this broad awareness of long-term trends in the developing world, as opposed to a fitful exposure to its exceptional events, yields a radically different world-view. And it is this new and different overall world-view which can, I believe, be the key to radically different attitudes and a radically different level of interest and involvement in this subject.

To audiences in the industrialized nations I sum up this different view by what I hope is a justifiable simplification: the world is roughly divided into four quarters. Approximately one quarter of mankind has now progressed to a point which can only be described as unprecedented affluence. Another half of the world's population has seen a significant improvement in living standards over the last 40 years and is now at the point where basic human needs — for food, shelter, water, education and a degree of health care — can be minimally but reliably met. And the final quarter of the human family has seen very little progress and remains standing, in abject poverty, below the broken bottom rungs of the development ladder.

In other words, it could be said that we have come three quarters of the way in the 10,000-year-old struggle to meet the basic needs of all mankind. That great human goal is now within reach. It could be achieved within less than half a century. And it could even be reached in our times.

With audiences in the industrialized world, and particularly with the young, such a world-view not only comes as a *surprise*, it almost invariably leads to a change in the oasis mentality. It is a positive and enthusiastic response which asks, "If the world has come so far, why can't we go all the way? Why can't something be done about the poorest 25 per cent? What's standing in the way of our taking the final step towards a world in which everyone's basic needs are met?"

It is long past the time that we addressed this problem, to try to ensure that legitimate efforts to respond to human need may also contribute more effectively than in the past to the creation of a deeper understanding, a more positive attitude and a more permanent commitment to the cause of world development.

Illustrations by Margaret Scott

UNICEF Board Widens Programmes

Breast-feeding Policy Boosted

The UNICEF Executive Board significantly strengthened the organization's policy against the promotion and distribution of breast-milk substitutes, passing an unusually strong resolution on the subject at the April-May meeting.

The Board urged "manufacturers and distributors of breast-milk substitutes to end free and low-cost supplies of infant formula to maternity wards and hospitals" by the end of next year to reduce the "detrimental effect on the initiation of breast-feeding".

It also proposed a study to examine marketing practices for infant food to assess how such promotional activities affect the well-being of mothers and children. It requested a progress report on limiting such activities by 1993.

The resolution, adopted by consensus, marked the first time in a decade that the Board had dealt with UNICEF policy on breast-feeding, and it was the first time the Board had set deadlines for specific actions.

The issue has long pitted multinational corporations against the advocates of child health, particularly in the developing nations, where use of infant formula in unsanitary conditions often leads to malnutrition and infant deaths.

The new resolution comes a decade after the proclamation of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes. The code sought to curtail promotion and distribution of infant formula and to encourage breast-feeding. However, only 37 countries have made the code, or some of its provisions, a legal requirement.

The Board also endorsed the Innocenti Declaration on the Protection, Promotion ahd Support of Breastfeeding as the basis for UNICEF policies, and requested a progress report next year and then every two years thereafter on promotion of breast-feeding. The Declaration, drafted at a UNICEF conference at the Innocenti International Child Development Centre in Florence, Italy, in August 1990, recommended that "all infants should be fed exclusively on breast milk from birth to 4-6 months of age" and thereafter should continue on breast milk, along with complementary foods until age two or beyond.

39 Resolutions Approved

The UNICEF Executive Board approved a record 39 resolutions, including follow-up on the World Summit for Children, emergency work in Bangladesh, the Persian Gulf and Latin America, and development of new vaccines to prevent childhood diseases.

The two-week meeting, which ended on 3 May, also said that Africa was "the region of highest priority" in work to ensure child survival, development and protection.

In closing the meeting, Ms. Lisbet Palme of Sweden, Chairman of the Executive Board, said the members had combined a critical review of programmes and budgets with a creative, constructive approach. She also called for more attention to be paid to environmental issues.

James P. Grant, UNICEF Executive Director, said the meeting had laid "firm foundations" and set an "operational direction to take full advantage of the leverage created by the momentous developments for children in the past year", including the World Summit for Children and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Board urged the international community to work to achieve the goals of the World Summit Declaration and Plan of Action, which pronounced goals in child survival, development and protection for the decade. It also called on UNICEF to provide full support to developing countries in achieving the objectives of the Convention.

Other resolutions dealt with assistance for the victims of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident in the Soviet Union, combating AIDS and assisting Palestinian children.

Children in Difficult Circumstances

Funds to Expand Activities

by Ian Steele

UNICEF plans to expand its work significantly for children in especially difficult circumstances (CEDC) through a new $3.4 million interregional programme over the next three years.

The policy of dealing with such children as a special area of concern was only established in 1986, but the CEDC programme undertaken since then has resulted in accelerated assistance to the point where 48 countries, mainly in Latin America, now have projects.

The UNICEF Executive Board, at its April-May meeting, approved $900,000 from general resources, and $2.5 million in supplementary funds, subject to availability, for the new programme. This will be in addition to the annual current expenditure of about $15 million in individual country programmes.

The new funds are designed to expand programmes for street and working children, those affected by armed conflict, and abused and neglected children. UNICEF has developed a strong base for these programmes in Latin America since it first established the CEDC programme.

The new fund is targeted at Africa, the Middle East and Asia, and is designed to broaden the scope of the programme beyond its current emphasis on street children, according to Clarence Shubert, UNICEF Senior Adviser on CEDC.

Mr. Shubert estimated that there will be a 50 per cent expansion in the number of programmes to more than 70 by the end of the three-year funding in 1994.

About a third of the funds are set aside for the new pilot projects in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Plans call for other funds to be utilized to share the experiences of Latin American nations through study visits and the use of resource people to help train personnel and develop guidelines and strategies for new country projects.

Mr. Shubert said UNICEF would contract for expert services with a number of national and regional NGOs working with these children. They include the African Network for Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect, Child Workers in Asia, and networks initiated by Childhope.

He said the contracts, for $10,000 to $20,000, will be for situation analyses, training and other activities. Although these are relatively small amounts, they sometimes represent as much as 20 per cent or 30 per cent of the budgets of these small organizations.

Most CEDC activities outside Latin America have involved efforts to combat the effects of war on children. UNICEF has negotiated 'corridors of peace' to deliver emergency supplies through Operation Lifeline Sudan, and 'days of tranquillity' to immunize children in El Salvador and Lebanon.

It has also reunited children and parents in Mozambique; helped to reduce the trauma accompanying violence in Lebanon, Mozambique, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and in Central America; and established projects in Afghanistan and Ethiopia to help the disabled and to rehabilitate children so that later in life they will be better able to resolve conflicts peacefully.

UNICEF has assisted projects for street children in Brazil and other Latin American countries, and in the Philippines, since the early 1980s. A locally financed, nationwide street children's movement in Brazil led to the inclusion of children's rights in the national constitution, and is becoming an example on which to base similar efforts to develop street children's programmes in Asia and Africa through collaboration between UNICEF and local and regional NGOs.

The incidence of child labour has also increased in the wake of economic recession, structural adjustment programmes, industrialization and rapid urbanization, but the problem has not been as effectively addressed as the street children phenomenon. UNICEF is cooperating closely with the International Labour Organisation in a major new programme to raise awareness of child labour and to combat it worldwide.

Mr. Shubert said it was important to remember that responses to children in especially difficult circumstances were very diverse, according to individual country settings and circumstances.

"We need to recognize that these manifestations, whether in the form of street children, refugee children or working children, are mostly a result of deeper fundamental social, political or economic problems. In the long run we have to deal with these underlying causes as well as with the need for services and protection."

United States

Children Become a National Issue

by Matt Bai,
U.S. Committee for UNICEF

Marian Wright Edelman, head of the Children's Defense Fund, tells some 1,000 educators, child advocates, doctors and public officials at CDF's annual conference in Washington that America's children need help.

"We're at a crossroads of great opportunity that we must seize", says Ms. Edelman, who founded CDF, the leading voice on children's issues in the U.S. "We can succeed only if Americans mobilize and spark a decade-long crusade. The tide is really going to turn. It has to."

Not long ago, Ms. Edelman and her colleagues were having trouble convincing most Americans that the tide was even headed in the wrong direction. But the problems facing America's children have rapidly become a national issue. America stands on the brink of losing a generation.

According to a report issued by the Food Research and Action Center in late March, 5.5 million American children under 12 go hungry in the United States for lack of resources. CDF estimates that about 20 per cent of U.S. children — 12.6 million — live in poverty, an increase of more than 2.5 million over the last decade.

The country's immunization rates are declining, and last year there were 16 times as many cases of measles as there were in 1983. And according to CDF, between 500,000 and 700,000 American children are homeless.

The media has picked up on the trend with a barrage of stories and editorials on children's issues. *The Washington Post* recently became one of the first major newspapers to assign a veteran reporter to cover full-time the war on child poverty, malnutrition and illiteracy.

Corporate America is also taking note. In March, five of the country's most influential business leaders warned a Congressional committee that the future of the U.S. workforce is in danger because of poor education and, in numerous cases, poor nutrition for the young. A week earlier, a leading business organization, the Committee on Economic Development, issued a report calling on the Government to lead businesses and community-based groups in implementing strategies that are proven to help children.

Such strategies were also the focus of the CDF conference, held last February, titled "What Works: Bridging the Gaps for America's Children". The participants, discussed a variety of federal, state and private programmes that have received high marks at a low cost.

One programme that has generated major interest is the New York Children's Health Project. The programme brings full-scale primary health care to more than 4,000 homeless children in the city's five boroughs and is now the country's largest private health-care project. It was established by popular singer Paul Simon and Irwin Redlener, a paediatrician, after the two men visited a Manhattan welfare hotel in 1986.

Three bright blue mobile vans, staffed by a team of five full-time doctors and a bilingual psychologist, visit 16 sites in the city regularly, attending to children and bringing them to specialists if necessary. Last year, the vans logged more than 12,000 contacts with children. The vans are equipped with cellular phones and video cassette recorders to show health education videos, and are connected to headquarters by a computer that keeps files on all the patients, who would otherwise have no documented medical history.

"That's a crucial element. Using a computer system allows us to really trace in an effective way the medical problems of children", Dr. Redlener says.

In 1988, Dr. Redlener and his colleagues put together a foundation, the Children's Health Fund, to raise money for the project. The Fund is now helping to establish similar programmes in six other areas across the United States.

Initially, the major funding for the $2.2 million project came from Mr. Simon. But in recent years the fund has broadened its support. Lederle Laboratories, a pharmaceutical company active in immunization, contributed $1 million in each of the last two years. The fund has also received a $700,000 federal grant.

Leaders of public and private initiatives agree that government must play the pivotal role in reaching out to children. And although the federal Government has increased funding to programmes that have been shown to work, child advocates say a greater commitment is needed.

One of the most acclaimed federal innovations for children is Head Start, a community-based programme that offers children from low-income families medical care, counselling and early educational activities. President George Bush has proposed increasing Head Start funding by $100 million in what he says is a first step towards bringing the programme to all eligible children. Currently, Head Start serves only 27 per cent of the children who could qualify.

The President has also increased spending for the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) by $223 million and for the immunization programme by $40 million.

"Politically and legislatively, 1990 was the best year for children and families in over a quarter century", said Christopher Dodd, a Democratic senator from Connecticut, speaking at the CDF conference.

Congress Backs Summit

The United States Congress is increasingly becoming an arena where members are citing international commitments as a reason for expanding concern and outlays for American children, as well as those outside the United States.

A bipartisan group of six Senators and 22 Representatives has co-sponsored legislation in Congress that would provide more than $1.5 billion in additional assistance over the next two years for children both in the United States and abroad.

For the first time the legislation makes a direct link between assistance for U.S. children and the international call for improvement in the condition of the young made at the World Summit for Children by 71 leaders last September.

In a related move, 15 Republican Senators called upon President George Bush to sign the Convention on the Rights of the Child and send it to the Senate for ratification. The plea was drafted by three prominent Republican Senators: Robert Dole, Richard Lugar and Mark Hatfield.

The letter notes that 135 heads of State or Government have signed the Convention and expresses "concern" that the United States is among a very small group of non-signers.

Actress Is Honoured

Audrey Hepburn and Venezuelan child.
(UNICEF/3126/Victoria Brynner)

by Joyce Green

The association between UNICEF and its Goodwill Ambassador, Audrey Hepburn, has produced countless benefits for children over the years.

In recent weeks the connection has had a particularly high profile in the American media as the famed actress received accolades for both her acting career and her charitable work.

The New York Times, television networks and the popular monthly magazine *Vanity Fair*, among others, paid tribute to Ms. Hepburn in April. Their coverage was timed to coincide with a gala event by the Film Society of Lincoln Center in New York, where she was honoured for her long movie career. The media praised her acting, style and elegance, her charm and grace. And they highlighted her current starring role as a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, pleading the cause of children around the world.

ABC television's evening news programme, the most watched network news show in the United States with 15 million viewers nightly, declared Ms. Hepburn 'Person of the Week', focusing on her work for UNICEF and telling how pictures of suffering children in Ethiopia some years ago had sparked off her 'second career'.

"It's because I'm known, in the limelight, that I'm getting all the gravy, but if you knew, if you saw some of the people who make it possible for UNICEF to help those children to survive. These are the people who do the jobs — the unknowns, whose names you will never know", she said in an interview in *Vanity Fair*, which covers a wide variety of topics, from politics and international affairs to the arts and fashion.

In *Vanity Fair*, her former co-star, Gregory Peck, described Ms. Hepburn's work for UNICEF as "her most wonderful and rewarding role, which she plays around the world".

She has travelled to Bangladesh, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Sudan and many other countries for UNICEF, meeting children and learning of their problems. In the ABC interview, Ms. Hepburn was eloquent in pleading for those in need. "All they need is the assistance to help themselves, which they are yearning to do".

Education – the Challenge to Change

by Ellen Weiss

Changing educational systems is at best a daunting enterprise, since it often involves altering long-held, traditional attitudes. A number of countries, however, have taken some fledgling steps towards such change as a result of the World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien, Thailand, in March 1990.

The Conference, which was sponsored by UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank, was a response to growing worldwide recognition that educational quality and access in many countries were either stagnating or actually declining in the face of relentlessly competing development needs.

Four basic end-of-decade goals emerged from the Conference:
❖ expansion of early childhood care and developmental activities;
❖ universal access to basic education and completion of primary education by at least 80 per cent of primary school-age children;
❖ a reduction by half of the adult illiteracy rate;
❖ the increased acquisition by individuals and families of the knowledge, skills and values required for better living and sustainable development.

The leaders of the four sponsoring organizations warned on the first anniversary of the Conference: "To achieve the goals of basic education for all by the year 2000, much more needs to be done. This will require greater efforts at country level and much greater support by the international community."

In the year since the Conference, there has been progress on a number of fronts towards the goals. "We are already seeing that what has come out of the Conference is not just rhetoric", says Dr. Aklilu Habte, Chief Adviser to the newly formed UNICEF Education Cluster.

In Nigeria, several goals have been specified for the period of 1991-95: 46 local government areas will be helped to provide basic literacy and numeracy training to 70,000 women and 80,000 girls, and 230,000 women and girls will be provided with health information in women's education centres.

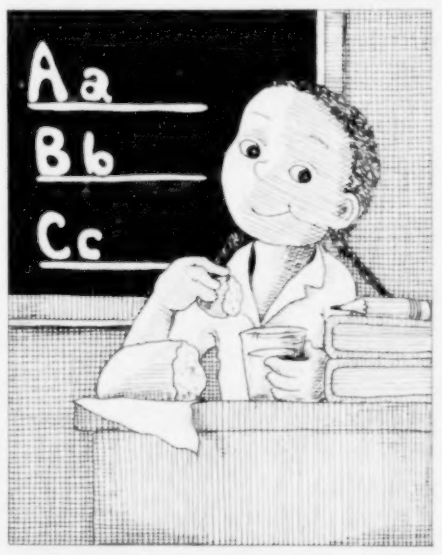
Primary schooling or its alternative is planned for every child within a kilometre of his or her home in India. The country plans to achieve 80 per cent functional literacy among 15 to 35-year-olds, male and female, from every identified disadvantaged group, by the year 1995. In 1985, the adult literacy rate in India was 58 per cent for men and 29 per cent for women.

Brazil plans extensive monitoring, evaluation and diagnosis of basic education at the municipal and state levels.

Bangladesh has made universal primary education compulsory and has required that all newly recruited primary school teachers be female. The country plans to reduce drop-out and repetition rates from 70 per cent in 1990 to 50 per cent by 1995.

"There are obstacles, of course", says Dr. Habte. "Innovation is one: How do we change what we have been doing for centuries? Education tends to be formalistic, and we need to be flexible and adaptable."

Dr. Habte is hopeful, however, about progress. "There is a renewed emphasis", he explains, "that these activities should not just be left to Governments, but that private volunteer agencies, professional associations, communities and parents should participate as much as possible. This was one of the major achievements of Jomtien."



For Summit, More Successes

It is almost nine months since the World Summit for Children was held at the United Nations on 29-30 September. Just like the gestation period of a baby, the stature and significance of the Declaration and Plan of Action born at the World Summit have grown steadily in those nine months.

As of mid-May, 107 heads of State or Government had signed the Declaration, a 50 per cent increase since the 71 leaders signed on 30 September in New York. This continuing commitment to the Summit goals for children is the best evidence that the Declaration and Plan of Action are not simply regarded as lofty documents to file and forget, according to Kul Gautam, Director, Planning Office, UNICEF.

He also noted that even changes of leadership have not led to reneging on commitments signed by their predecessors, citing new Governments in Bangladesh, Mali, Norway, Poland and the United Kingdom.

Equally important, many Governments have appointed high-level bodies to prepare national plans of action to work towards reaching the goals in child survival, development and protection outlined in the Plan of Action. These targets include 50 per cent reductions in the rates of maternal mortality, malnutrition among children under five, and adult illiteracy; a one-third decline in under-five mortality rates; and universal access to safe drinking water, sanitation and basic education.

Among countries that have begun this planning process, as called for by the Summit, are: Bolivia, Canada, Egypt, France, India, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Republic of Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States and Zimbabwe.

The UNICEF Executive Board has asked the organization to prepare guidelines for such national plans to help countries establish similar procedures to assist in global evaluation and monitoring of progress or set-backs for children.

Referring to the pledges for children made by the leaders at the Summit, UNICEF Executive Director James P. Grant said in a speech to the Society for International Development in Amsterdam in May: "Nothing quite like it — in terms of the scope and specificity of commitments — has ever happened."

Struggling With the Environment

by George Krimsky,
Executive Director of the Centre
for Foreign Journalists

"Some of you have said we must have optimism about the future, but how can I have any? Where can I find hope?"

These words, spoken haltingly, were met with silence by a normally voluble audience that was gathered around a table in the cavernous hall of an ancient Florentine orphanage.

Barbara Cieszewska, a reporter for the newspaper *Rzeczpospolita* in Katowice, Poland, posed the question after telling colleagues about children in her native district of Silesia who suffered from widespread illness as a result of unchecked industrial pollution.

It was not a question to be casually broached, but Charles Alexander, *Time* magazine's senior editor for environmental news, broke the silence. "There is never a situation without hope", he began. He went on to say that journalists have an enormously important role to play, to inform the public of dangers and their sources, offer guidance about solutions and campaign for reform.

His remarks unleashed a torrent of ideas around the room. They ranged from an appeal for more information-packed press kits to infusing Tom and Jerry cartoons with the ethics of global survival.

The scene was a metaphor for the gathering itself — a seminar on children and the environment for journalists from 12 nations, held at the UNICEF International Child Development Centre (ICDC) at Innocenti in Florence.

"Just five years ago, who would have believed that a group of hardened journalists would be holding such a discussion?", exclaimed Varindra Tarzie Vittachi, a former Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, who chaired the 11-14 March meeting. "We have seen that a great deal can change, can be accomplished and can be hoped for."

One of the outcomes of the Florence gathering was the formation of an *ad hoc* committee, chaired by Rushworth Kidder, columnist for the *Christian Science Monitor* and founder of the Institute for Global Ethics in Camden, Maine, to draft a 'code of environmental ethics' for journalists.

The seminar produced widespread coverage of environmental issues both in the East European media and in the industrialized nations. *Newsweek International* cited the gathering in an overview of the state of the environment in the region.

Peru Epidemic

ORT Helps Fight Against Cholera

by Pamela Knight

The bad news has been around now for months, and it travelled fast. Peru has been hit by a devastating epidemic of cholera, the most lethal of the diarrhoeal diseases, unknown in the Americas since the 1880s. It is estimated that nearly 200,000 people have been affected, and about 1,500 have died. More than 1,000 people a day fall victim.

The good news, however, is that oral rehydration therapy (ORT), which annually saves the lives of countless millions of children suffering from the dehydration caused by diarrhoea, is a life-saver in the fight against cholera. When the first cholera cases were reported, the Ministry of Health had already begun its summer campaign against diarrhoea, which causes up to 20,000 child deaths each year in Peru.

With a functioning ORT system already in place, Peru was able to contain the mortality rate to 0.65 per cent, down from 5 per cent when the disease first struck. This success is due to the widespread use of oral rehydration salts (ORS).

This was made possible because Peru has literally thousands of health posts created to support universal child immunization (UCI), and each health post controls and supports four to five survival centres that are run by trained mothers from their own houses.

UNICEF has opened an appeal for $2 million to combat the epidemic. $438,000 has been provided from emergency funds, $152,000 by the Canadian UNICEF Committee and $50,000 by the Spanish Committee for UNICEF. Simultaneously, UNICEF approved $940,000 to support UCI and strengthen the deteriorating health system.

Cholera, an acutely infectious disease, spreads with frightening speed. Untreated, it can kill its victims in less than half a day. It is characterized by violent diarrhoea, leading to rapid and near-complete dehydration.

Cholera is a disease of underdevelopment and is mainly spread through unsanitary water supplies. It was a scourge in mid-19th century Europe until systems to provide clean piped water were developed. Similar conditions prevail in Peru today where 40 per cent of the 7 million population of Lima, the capital, have no access to potable piped water.

Huge investments will be needed by cash-strapped Peru and other South American nations to prevent cholera from becoming endemic, as it is in South Asia. Health experts hope that the Peruvian epidemic may lead to a reordering of priorities for clean water in the same way as it did in Europe in the 19th century.

During a visit to Lima, Dr. Hiroshi Nakajima, the Director-General of the World Health Organization, said that the deplorable state of Peru's sanitary infrastructure was a result of the economic crisis. "The debt repayment obligations ordained by international financial organizations further aggravate the lack of resources", he said.

Cholera surged ahead in the poorer parts of Lima and struck hard in the northern Andean district of Cajamarca. Indian peasants there face treks of up to three days to reach a medical post, and early treatment is essential.

Marcia Rodriguez, UNICEF coordinator, says that many die on the way.

Peru is suffering from years of civil war and economic stagnation. Malnourishment is so widespread that it stunts the growth of one child in three. Of every 1,000 children born, 86 do not reach their fifth birthday.

With UNICEF support, the Health Ministry launched an intense radio and television campaign to alert the public of the importance of personal hygiene, fundamental to the prevention of cholera, and the dangers of contaminated food. The popular national dish of raw fish, *ceviche*, was singled out as particularly hazardous.

The Government also launched a national mobilization campaign to combat the cholera epidemic. Goals include the installation of 8,000 communal oral rehydration units; improvement of the basic sanitation of 200,000 families in critical areas by providing them with chlorinated water and sanitary means of waste disposal; and training of 8,000 mobilizers on the proper use of ORT and sanitation facilities.

Since 1989, within the framework of the UNICEF country programme, some 2,400 communal oral rehydration units have been

A young Peruvian girl clutches a packet of oral rehydration salts — the key to fighting cholera. (UNICEF/4460/91/Antonio Martinez)

set up, providing prompt and effective treatment of diarrhoeal dehydration at the community level. So there was already a base for an 'Operation ORT' against cholera.

UNICEF has given the Ministry of Health over a million ORS packets, 5,000 sets of glucose injectable solution, 15,000 sets of sodium chloride solution and 1,500 packs of tetracycline tablets.

The spectacular effectiveness of ORT in combating diarrhoeal dehydration was widely shown for the first time 20 years ago, when a cholera epidemic raged through refugee camps during the independence war in Bangladesh in 1971. Most patients were given ORS, resulting in a mortality rate of 4 per cent. In severe epidemics, the fatality rate of untreated cases may exceed 50 per cent and has been known to reach as high as 90 per cent.

The Bangladesh experience, which has been repeated this year after a cyclone devastated the country, showed that cholera cases do not always require intravenous therapy, which calls for a high level of nursing care to insert the needle and to regulate the drip. More than 90 per cent of cholera cases, if caught in time, are mild, clinically similar to other forms of acute diarrhoea, and can be treated with ORT alone.

In Peru, for the first time, paediatricians became convinced that ORT was in fact the best therapy for all kinds of diarrhoea. The overload of young patients in the hospitals forced the doctors to organize oral rehydration rooms, and the results were so encouraging that the resistance of the medical community to ORT was overcome.

Vans with loudspeakers travelled to the poorest districts with messages instructing people to cook their food completely and boil their water.

Approximately 100,000 booklets providing basic facts on the prevention of cholera were distributed to schoolteachers, community centres and the grass-roots women's organizations that provide an effective channel for the diffusion of basic survival information. Health workers were supplied with 70,000 booklets.

Despite these activities by the Government, there were problems. Treatment of the Peruvian epidemic was hampered by a strike of hospital nurses, technicians and administrative staff. Well over 35,000 people have been hospitalized, and they must depend on the care of nursing volunteers.

The public received conflicting messages from government officials concerned about the effect on the economy of an embargo on the consumption of raw fish. The country confronted a 'catch-22' situation in which Peru's main industry, fishing, faced being put out of business in order to safeguard the health of Peru's people.

Experts pointed out that the epidemic could leave Peruvians even more malnourished than at present if they could no longer eat fish.

Peru's medical costs together with losses to its fishing and tourism industries are predicted to reach $1 billion. Battered by its economic predicament, the Government has been able to do little so far to upgrade the country's sanitation systems.

Roberta Okey, an official of the Pan American Health Organization, said: "This is a case of a disease looking for a place to happen. The chief way it spreads is through dirty water, and it is estimated that 50 per cent of the people in the Americas don't have access to clean water."

In fact, cholera has now been diagnosed in Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Ecuador, and experts fear that there is no effective way to stop it from spreading right across the continent. UNICEF is supplying ORS to countries at risk.

Forum to focus on Africa

The NGO Committee on UNICEF will hold its 1991 Forum in Kadoma, Zimbabwe, from 4 to 9 November. The location was chosen to emphasize concern about the enormity of the problems facing sub-Saharan Africa, and the danger that current international attention focused on the Gulf region and Eastern Europe will divert much-needed funds from Africa.

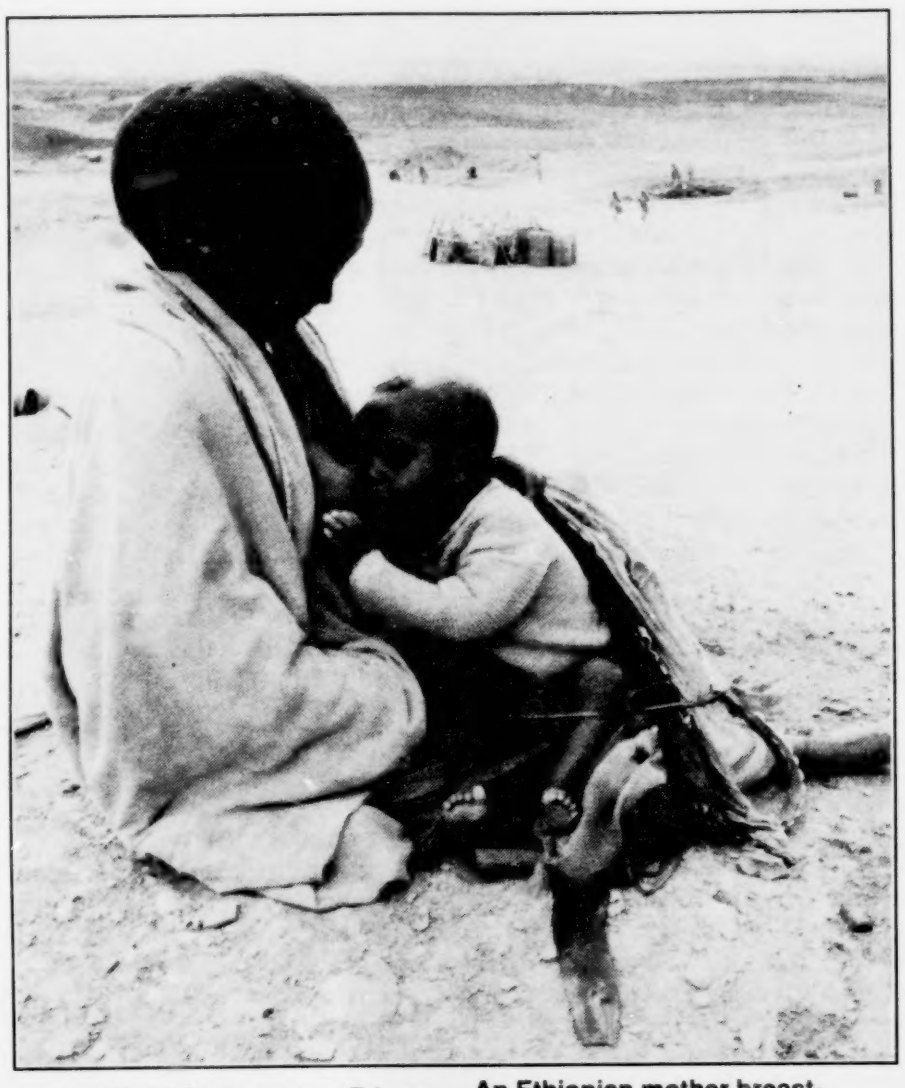
Entitled 'Effective Participation in Local and Global Child Development', the five-day conference will bring together representatives from NGOs in the nearly 40 countries in the region and from international NGOs concerned with children's issues to develop plans and strategies for the future of African children.

The goals of this Forum, according to Cyril Ritchie, Chair of the NGO Committee Working Group on Child Strategy, are to exchange ideas on action to be taken collectively and individually, build partnerships and develop mutual support between North and South.

The Forum will be preceded by NGO national preparatory consultations in many countries, from which representatives will be chosen to attend the Kadoma Forum. By keeping the basic number of participants to 30 from the host country, 80 from elsewhere in Africa and 30 international NGO representatives, organizers of the Forum hope to maximize opportunities for small group discussions.

Workshops and speeches will focus on regional follow-up to implement the World Summit for Children Declaration and Plan of Action, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the World Conference on Education for All, as well as two recent specifically African documents: the 1989 African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and the 1990 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

For more information regarding the Forum, contact the NGO Committee's Working Group on Child Strategy, 15 Chemin Rojoux, 1231 Conches, Geneva, Switzerland.



An Ethiopian mother breast-feeding her child. Nutrition is one of the important topics to be discussed at the NGO Forum in Zimbabwe in November.
(UNICEF/John Isaac)

Eastern Europe priorities

As the rapid changes in Eastern and Central Europe revealed the magnitude of problems facing the region's children, the NGO Committee on UNICEF undertook, with UNICEF, a joint survey of its 172 members on their interest in developing programmes in the region. As a result of nearly 100 positive responses from Europe and North America, four meetings in Geneva and one in New York City have already taken place.

The present problem for the NGO community is not lack of interest but lack of coordination. The enormous publicity surrounding the plight of these children, especially in Romania, has resulted in thousands of relief efforts ranging from large international NGOs to individuals driving across the border, their car trunks filled with toys. A coordinating committee is being established in Geneva to ease this duplication of effort and to build a network of local and international NGOs active in child-related areas.

In addition, action proposals are being developed in five priority areas: health (including training of professionals), education, the environment as related to children, community service and children's rights.

For more information contact the NGO Committee on UNICEF, c/o UNICEF, Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland or c/o UNICEF, 3 UN Plaza (H-9F), New York, N.Y. 10017, USA.

New vigils planned on Summit anniversary

A coalition of non-governmental organizations is planning to hold a new — but different — series of vigils around the world for children to commemorate the first anniversary of the World Summit for Children.

The celebrations in late September and early October will focus on a weekend of religious services on 27-29 September, followed by a week of classroom activities in schools on 30 September to 4 October. Unlike 1990, there will be no candlelight vigils, which drew more than 1 million participants in 75 countries in the week before the Summit.

So far, groups in 11 countries have agreed to participate, but organizers expect a similar number of countries as last year to take part. The 11 countries are: Australia, Bermuda, Burkina Faso, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Germany, India, Japan, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The religious services will feature sermons, musical events and other activities to inform congregants about the promises made at the Summit and what they can do to ensure that the promises are kept. In the schools, lesson plans will be designed to inform students and their families about the situation of children.

In the United States, former President Jimmy Carter will serve as the Honorary Chair of the 'World Summit for Children Vigils '91 — Keeping the Promise'. Actors Jeff Bridges and Valerie Harper will serve as Celebrity Co-Chairs.

To organize Vigil activities, write to: Children's Vigil '91, 236 Massachusetts Ave. NE, Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20002-4890. Fax: (202) 546-3228.

Publications on illiteracy and war

Women and Literacy, prepared and compiled by Marcela Ballara. Published to coincide with International Literacy Year in 1991, this book deals with the effects of illiteracy on women and girls and the broad implications of reversing this condition.

The book focuses on the ways in which literacy supports health, agriculture, nutrition and other development efforts. It shows how literacy can help to improve the status of women and to develop the capacity for an economically productive life.

Part of the Women and World Development Series, this 256-page book costs $51.95 or 31.20 pounds sterling (including shipping) and is available from Textbook Manager, Zed Books, 576 Caledonian Road, London N1 9BU, UK.

No Place to Be a Child: Growing Up in a War Zone, by James Garbarino, Kathleen Kostelny and Nancy Dubrow. Published by Lexington Books.

Living in a country torn by civil strife or on an urban street, children are victims of war and violence.

The book shows the lives of children in Cambodia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, the West Bank and inner-city Chicago. Research on the psychological and developmental effects of trauma on children provides the backdrop for these moving and all-too-true stories. The book provides a timely reminder of the devastation wreaked by war and is a testament to children's ability to survive and even triumph.

No Place to Be a Child costs $21.95 and can be ordered from Lexington Books, attention: Dino Battista, 866 Third Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022, USA.

Correction: The child's poem on the cover page of the last issue of *Action for Children* was taken from the *TAPORI* newsletter, No. 175, February 1991, published by the International Movement ATD/Fourth World.

Helping children in war

Armed conflict causes a rupture. The survivors will always be changed people. The old 'normal' is gone, a new 'normal' must be created.

Although there are many sorts of trauma, the Gulf crisis has focused particular attention on those that result from armed conflict — the terror of repeated bombings or artillery attacks, the anguish of helplessness and vulnerability in the face of brutality, the disappearance of family members.

Studies have been carried out on the effects of stress from armed conflict on children, but methods to help them cope with their traumatic experiences are only just beginning to be developed. At a consultation organized by the NGO Committee on UNICEF on 'Adult Response to Children in Time of War' on Saturday, 20 April, at UNICEF House in New York, several researchers in this field shared some of the knowledge acquired to date and suggested various approaches.

The impact of modern media is such that children do not have to directly experience war to be affected. Ms. Lisbet Palme, Chairman of the UNICEF Executive Board and of the Swedish Committee for UNICEF, emphasized in her opening statement that children are deeply affected by war, even when they are far from the battlefields.

Ms. Nancy Dubrow, of the World Federation of Mental Health, stressed that, for children, war is not an event but a lasting 'condition', for it radically alters their perception of the world. Studies have shown, however, that the presence of a caring adult at the time of a frightening experience reduces its impact on the child, and makes it less devastating.

Ms. Mona Macksoud of Columbia University presented a profile of trauma among the children in Lebanon. It is estimated that 97 per cent have suffered at least one traumatic experience. The result can be a return to bedwetting, nightmares, a decreased attention span, fearfulness, increased dependency, or even chronic depression. Encouraging to note was the response of parents and teachers, many of whom have attempted to help the children cope with stress.

Everett Ressler, of Millersville University in Pennsylvania and the University of Delaware, and Dr. Yael Danieli, of the Group Project for Holocaust Survivors and Their Children, focused on treatment and prevention of long-term effects. Mr. Ressler said that, before undertaking any action in response to child-trauma, organizations should first assess the types of problems to which children have been exposed and the capability of the community to respond. Dr. Danieli added that help must be therapeutic to avoid victimization being transmitted from one generation to the next.

Of major concern to the participants was not only the best way to respond to such emergency situations, but also ways of *preventing* them in the future. The need for NGOs to give greater priority to peace education was a recurring theme.

José del Carmen Espinosa Montoyo, a 10-year-old Salvadorian boy, depicts his feelings about war. The drawing is part of an art exhibition, 'Voice of the Children', sponsored by Madre, a New York-based NGO dealing with mothers and children.

Ms. Palme, a child psychologist, stressed that article 39 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child can serve as a platform for action by NGOs, as it calls upon States Parties "to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of: any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse; torture or ... armed conflicts."

Proceedings of the consultation will be available shortly from the NGO Committee on UNICEF, 3 UN Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10017, USA.

Maurice Pate award for UK group

UNICEF is giving special recognition to a non-governmental organization that believes children can help children, and in the process help adults as well.

The British group Child-to-Child Trust has won the $25,000 Maurice Pate Award for its achievements employing the concept of using the child to take health messages to family, friends and the community.

Working with UNICEF, Child-to-Child has increased immunization rates by helping children in developing countries to organize groups for immunization, remind parents to take their children to be vaccinated and conduct surveys.

In Cross River State in Nigeria, for instance, children suggested that a wall be built around the community's water source. This helped prevent contamination and the spread of guinea worm disease. Through songs and plays, they also taught friends and relatives how the disease is spread through dirty water.

Child-to-Child has just produced an information sheet called 'Safe Life Skills' which gives explicit facts about how AIDS is caught and how it can be prevented. In Zambia, children have set up anti-AIDS clubs to develop skills in resisting peer pressure and learning to say no.

The organization provides medical information — compiled by its staff and volunteer professionals worldwide — to more than 60 countries. Village health workers, teachers and even Governments then pass the information on to the children.

Child-to-Child Trust was chosen from 12 nominations made by UNICEF field offices, National Committees and members of the Executive Board. The award is given in memory of UNICEF's first Executive Director.

UNICEF Executive Director James P. Grant recommended to the Executive Board that the Award be given to the Trust "in view of its outstanding contributions resulting from an innovative idea which has gained wide acceptance with a potential for replication through a large network of organizations".

Mr. Grant said Child-to-Child is increasingly being seen "as an integral part of all health education". He added, "The Child-to-Child approach and the new practices it has generated have proved to be both powerful and sustainable".

The Trust was launched in 1978 and is jointly sponsored by the Institute of Education and the Institute of Child Health of the University of London. The Trust's revenue in 1989-90 was 114,421 pounds sterling.

Previous winners of the Maurice Pate Award have been the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research in Bangladesh, the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Catholic Church of El Salvador, and Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, the First Lady of Egypt.

Annual Meeting

Nineteen ninety was a historic year for NGOs.

"What a year!" These opening words by James P. Grant in his address to the Annual General Meeting of the NGO Committee on UNICEF accurately reflected the strong sentiments of the large group present at the 18 April meeting in New York.

Recalling the historic events of 1990 — the World Summit for Children Declaration and Plan of Action, the World Conference on Education for All, the 'days of tranquillity', the Convention on the Rights of the Child — the UNICEF Executive Director said that "none of this would have happened without the NGOs". He added: "If you had asked me five years ago whether we could get the world community to enter into these kinds of agreements, I would have said the chances were one in a hundred. Now we've got them and our challenge is to make sure they work."

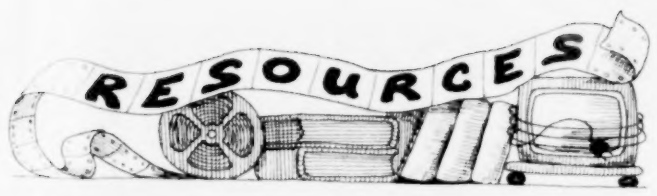
Summarizing the accomplishments of 1990, Paul McCleary, Executive Director of the Christian Children's Fund and newly elected President of the NGO Committee on UNICEF, emphasized the critical role played by NGOs in two major areas: protecting children's rights by mobilizing government action and change in public policy; and broadening the mandate from a primary emphasis on physical survival to new and increased activity in the areas of psychological needs and human development. This has meant making new efforts that address the issues of street children, children in war, child labour, and education — with a special emphasis on girls.

New officers and a new board were elected at the Annual General Meeting. Mr. McCleary was elected President, and the Deputy President is Ms. Ellen Mouravieff-Apostol of the International Federation of Social Workers.

The following organizations were elected to serve as Members-at-Large of the Board: Childhope, Defense for Children International, International Save the Children Alliance, Junior Chamber International, La Leche League, League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Plan International and World Federation for Mental Health.

Mr. Grant closed with a strong charge to the NGO community. "If ever there was a time for the NGOs to lead," he said, "this is it."

NGO Action for Children is produced by the NGO Committee for UNICEF and edited by Sara Friedman. The opinions expressed in the articles do not necessarily reflect the official position of UNICEF.



UNICEF Publications
The following publications are available for sale from:
UNICEF H-12G
3 UN Plaza
New York, NY 10017, USA

Children and Development in the 1990s: A UNICEF Sourcebook. English, French and Spanish. $35.

Statements by Heads of State/Government at the World Summit for Children. English, French and Spanish. $16.

Leadership for Children: Personal Messages of Heads of State and Government. Many in the national language. $35.

World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and Plan of Action. English, French and Spanish. $7.

From Handpumps to Health. The evolution of water and sanitation programmes in Bangladesh, India and Nigeria, by Maggie Black. English only. $17.

The following publications are available free from UNICEF offices or National Committees.

World Summit for Children — Words and Images. English only.

First Call for Children. Pocket book edition of the texts of the World Summit Declaration and Plan of Action and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. English, French and Spanish.

1991 UNICEF Annual Report. Available in English, French and Spanish, as well as in a number of other languages. (Check with your local UNICEF office for language availability.)

EDev News. A thrice-yearly bulletin on Education for Development, produced by the UNICEF Geneva Office, Switzerland. English and French.

Jordanian Children in the Eye of the Storm. Limited copies available from the UNICEF Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa, Amman, Jordan.

Other Publications
Children's Rights and You. English, French and Spanish. From the NGO Group for the Convention, c/o DCI, P.O. Box 88, CH-1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland.

Fact Sheet (No. 10) on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Available in English, French and Spanish. Arabic, Chinese and Russian versions to follow. Contact the UN Human Rights Centre, Geneva, Switzerland.

Water Harvesting in Five African Countries by M.D. Lee and J.T. Visscher. Available from IRC, P.O. Box 93190, 2509 AD The Hague, The Netherlands. (Order Code OP 14.) $17.50.

Infant and Child Nutrition Worldwide: Issues and Perspectives. Edited by Dr. Frank Falkner. The Telford Press, 105 Forest Avenue, West Caldwell, NJ 07006, USA.

Communication for Rural Development. Available in English and French. From FAO, Rome, Italy.

Powerful Images. Available in English only. From FAO, Rome, Italy.

Community Work/Social Work Training in Refugee Camps. The Rådda Barnen Library, Swedish Save the Children, Box 27320, S-102 54 Stockholm, Sweden.

The Politics of Children's Survival by George Kent. Praeger Publishers, P.O. Box 5007, Westport, CT, USA. $39.95. (ISBN 0-275-93723-2)

Cities of Hunger: urban malnutrition in developing countries by Jane Pryor and Nigel Crook. Oxfam Publications, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ, UK. £4.95.

UNICEF Videos
A number of audiovisual materials are also available on loan from UNICEF offices and National Committees. (Check with your local office for titles.)

One Day in September. (28 minutes.) Contains speeches of leaders at the World Summit for Children, held in New York in September 1990, along with footage about the condition of children around the world. Available in Arabic, English, French and Spanish. A number of local language versions are being produced. In various formats.

341. (13 minutes.) Reviews problems facing children. The title derives from the 341 children who die during the 13-minute duration of the video which was shown at the World Summit for Children, and was screened on a number of national television stations. Available in Arabic, English, French and Spanish. In various formats.

UN Videos for Sale
Key to Freedom: Women and Literacy. (28 minutes.) Examines projects in Africa, Asia, and North and South America. Available in English, French and Spanish, in various formats, from Department of Public Information, United Nations, New York, NY, USA. $50.

The Water of Ayole. (28 minutes.) Shows how a village in Togo, with limited resources, went about securing a supply of safe water. Available in English and French, in various formats, from UNDP, Division of Information, New York, NY, USA. $16.

Guinea Worm: the Fiery Serpent. (20 minutes.) On dracunculiasis in Nigeria. Available in English and French, in various formats, from UNDP, Division of Information, New York, NY, USA. $16.

Television
You may see a new programme, *All Our Children*, on your TV screen. Produced by the BBC, ABC Australia and MTV Hungary, the 12-hour series follows the lives of six children in Brazil, China, Hungary, India, Kenya and the UK. The films, narrated by Judi Dench, begin with the birth of a child in each country and then trace their progress and their families through their infancy, examining the different ways in which their respective cultures nurture and educate them.

Cover photograph:
UNICEF/Roger Lemoyne

First Call for Children

First Call for Children is a new bimonthly periodical that replaces three other UNICEF publications: *Intercom, Action for Children* and *African Kora.* Readers of all three publications will receive ***First Call for Children***.

UNICEF H-9F
3 UN Plaza
New York, NY 10017, USA
Interim Editor: Jay Ross